DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 038 628 AL 002 360

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TITLE	Bilingual Schooling: A Cross-Disciplinary Approach.
PUB DATE	20 Mar 70
NOTE	9p.; Paper given at the fourth annual TESOL Convention, San Francisco, California, March 20,1970
EDRS PRICE	EDRS Price MF-$0.25 HC-$0.55
DESCRIPTORS	*Bilingual Education, Elementary Grades, *English (Second Language), *Interdisciplinary Approach, *Program Design, Spanish, Spanish Speaking, Teaching Methods
IDENTIFIERS	*Southwest Education Development Laboratory

ABSTRACT

Essentially an antipoverty measure, the Bilingual Education Act, which is supporting 76 bilingual programs in public elementary schools, comes far from meeting the needs of any significant proportion of the disadvantaged children whose language is other than English. One of the various federal and regional organizations striving to ameliorate these inadequacies is the Southwest Educational Development Laboratory in Austin, Texas. The author, director of SWEDL's Language Development/Bilingual Education Program, describes this program as a multi-faceted learning system designing and expanding instructional materials and staff development. Its experimental program, to be ready for the 1970-71 school year, is intended to be a rigorous and carefully controlled comparison of three approaches to educating the Spanish-speaking Mexican American children in Texas: (1) the traditional approach, in which the non-English speaking child is thrown in midstream to sink or swim; (2) the English as a second language approach, which makes concessions in the form and rate of teaching, but little or no use of the home language; and (3) the bilingual approach, in which 75 percent of the teaching, including readiness and reading, will be in Spanish, and 25 percent in English as a second language. All of the teachers will be Mexican American; those in the bilingual approach will be bilingual. (AMM)

ED038628

BILINGUAL SCHOOLING: A CROSS-DISCIPLINARY APPROACH

by

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March 20, 1970

Among the many possible ways of considering bilingualism I have selected that of bilingual education - or more precisely, schooling. We have at present at least a hundred bilingual programs in our public elementary schools, of which 76 are supported by 7.5 million dollars under the Bilingual Education Act of 1968. Congress has just appropriated twenty-five million dollars for 1970, of which the President will authorize the expenditure of at least twenty-one and a quarter million dollars. This will permit an extension of as many of the 76 programs as have proved successful and of a considerable number of new programs.

Gratifying though this federal support of a relatively new and exciting form of education is, it represents only a drop in the bucket. The Bilingual Education Act is essentially an anti-poverty measure but even so it comes far from meeting the needs of any significant proportion of the disadvantaged children whose language is other than English. As long as funds are so severely limited, it is of course proper that they be used first for the benefit of low-income families, but the national interest in maintaining and cultivating our language and cultural resources has so far been entirely overlooked. At the recent Round Table meeting at Georgetown University Joshua Fishman made a strong and eloquent plea in favor of broadening the scope of the Bilingual Education Act.

AL 002 360

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Present bilingual schooling is inadequate not only in extent but also in quality, as Bruce Gaarder brought out in his presentation at the Georgetown Round Table meeting. This is perhaps inevitable in the early stages, but unless reasonable quality is achieved soon the success of bilingual schooling is in danger. There are, to be sure, some hopeful signs. The U. S. Office of Education is insisting more and more in its sponsored programs on the notion of public accountability and is providing local education agencies with help in such basic matters as defining objectives in performance terms, measuring the promised performance, and requiring an educational audit at the end of a contract year. Education Service Centers also provide school districts with supplementary services, and in some cases have themselves been designated as local education agencies in order to increase their usefulness. The Bureau of Indian Affairs is taking an increased interest in the bilingual education of American Indians and Eskimos but is hampered by a lack of funds and bureaucratic uncertainties. And several of the fifteen Regional Educational Laboratories are also engaged in research and development having to do with bilingual schooling. Since I am involved in this kind of developmental work in the Southwest Educational Development Laboratory in Austin, let me briefly describe our work.

The Language Development/Bilingual Education Learning System is based on a newly awakened awareness of the need for better education of linguistically and culturally different children.

The prediction for successful achievement in school is low for children

whose native language is not English. Among linguistic groups, the rate of school failure traditionally has been high among the disadvantaged Spanish-speaking Mexican-Americans in the Southwest and the French speakers of Louisiana.

To improve the educational opportunities of children from these groups, the Southwest Educational Development Laboratory is creating a multi-faceted learning system. Instructional materials and staff development are two components of this program that are being designed and expanded. The learning system seeks to encourage these disadvantaged children by enhancing their self-concept, broadening their educational experiences through the use and cultivation of their first language, and providing entrée into an English-speaking school world.

Research has supported the theories that children can best learn to read and write in their mother tongue, that ages two to six are particularly favorable for learning, and that young children are able to learn more than one language simultaneously. The development of language is directed toward the improvement of each child's oral, reading, and writing skills. Curriculum materials produced to date and still under development include: Oral Language Development-Science, Grades 1-6 (English and Spanish); Oral Language Development-Social Studies, Grades 1-3 (English and Spanish); Self-Concept, K and/or Grade 1 (English and Spanish); Reading, Grades 1-2 (English and Spanish); and Composition, Grades 1-3 (English only). Staff

development materials are being designed to train school personnel to use the curricular materials. And as funds become available, parent involvement will be encouraged through the elaboration of materials designed for use by the parents with their children at home.

Curriculum and staff development materials are being used at sites in five states and involve more than fifteen thousand children. In addition, the Program has been adopted as the bilingual model for the National Follow Through Program.

Work has also been started on a design for teaching all subject areas through the children's first language, beginning with the first school year. Language Arts will be the first area to be developed. Mathematics, Science, and Social Studies will continue to be presented in the child's native language. Eventually, a full program in Spanish, and later in French, including art, music, health, safety, and physical education will be developed.

Other major areas of concern include motivation, to be created by providing materials to arouse and maintain interest and to help develop self-confidence; and individually planned instruction, which can encourage quick learners to advance rapidly and give slow learners time to progress without threat of failure.

The results should be a flexible program enabling the school systems to use any or all of the bilingual program.

It is in short the aim of the Language Development/Bilingual Education Program to help make non-English-speaking disadvantaged children functionally bilingual as well as soundly educated.

The first significant test will come at the end of the second year, that is, at the end of the first grade, at which time the readiness of these children to be advanced into the second grade will be assessed. This testing will take place in English and will involve readiness and reading in English. Our hypothesis therefore is that the best readiness for reading and writing in English for Mexican-American Spanish-dominant children is learning to read and write in Spanish.

At the same time that we are designing this experimental model we mean to collect appropriate materials both in English and Spanish for use in the kindergarten and first grade. We intend to propose at least two sets of materials for each subject area in the curriculum. These materials will be selected or adapted from those collected from various parts of the Hispanic world.

A successful design, we realize, must satisfy many different needs. It must be bilingual if it is to satisfy linguists and language teachers. It must be bicultural in order to satisfy sociologists and anthropologists. It must be suited to the particular age of the children involved if it is to satisfy developmental psychologists and early childhood specialists. It must be integrated to satisfy politicians. It must be individualized to

satisfy pedagogues. It must be simple to operate to satisfy teachers, functional to satisfy administrators, testable to satisfy research designers, affective to satisfy psychologists, economical to satisfy taxpayers, interesting to satisfy children, and convincing to satisfy the general public. In a word, if a bilingual program is to measure up to the requirements of so many exigent specialists and to satisfy so many special interests, it should be designed by a team of specialists across disciplines. This is what we are attempting to do in the Southwest Educational Development Lab in Austin.

A final word about the time table. We are hoping to have a finished theoretical model and some selected materials ready for tryout at the beginning of the 1970-71 school year. In the light of formative evaluation we would hope to have ready for fall 1971 a revised model as well as a more nearly complete selection of tested materials. Pilot testing would presumably take place in 1971-72, and, with luck, the entire kindergarten and perhaps the first grade course of study would be ready for field testing in 1972-73. In the meantime the Lab has an earlier learning system which is itself being refined and improved and which serves to give us the time necessary to complete our second experimental model.

Let me now illustrate with transparencies this experimental program. It is intended to be a rigorous and carefully controlled comparison of three approaches to the education of our Spanish-speaking Mexican American children

in Texas.

The first approach, which we may call the traditional, is that which has been in favor over the decades. It rests on the proposition that since English is the official language of the country every American needs to learn English. The non-English-speaking child is considered to be most likely to learn if he is just thrown in midstream to sink or to swim. The medium of instruction is English and no concessions are made to the child whose native language is not English.

The second approach is called the English as a Second Language approach. Like the first, it recognizes that all children need to learn English and assumes that the school should devote its entire attention to teaching in and through English. However, it does recognize that for many children English is not the first language and that therefore certain concessions have to be made in the <u>form</u> and in the <u>rate</u> of teaching. This approach makes little or no use of the home language for educational purposes beyond perhaps a few words to facilitate communication between teacher and pupil.

The third approach is the bilingual approach. It rests upon the realization that the home language may be the most developed and therefore the best medium for learning in general and particularly for learning to read and write. In this stream then 75% of the teaching will be done in Spanish, including readiness and reading in Spanish, and 25% of the teaching will be

done in and through English with a recognition that English is a second language.

We hope to be able to try out our design in schools where the kindergarten population is 100% Mexican American and Spanish dominant. All of the teachers will be Mexican Americans and those in the bilingual approach will have learned to read and write in Spanish as children and will have maintained their practice in reading and writing throughout their career. The others will be able to relate warmly to the children but are not necessarily capable of teaching in Spanish.

We plan to keep the factor of motivation constant by asking the total pool of teachers to rank order our three approaches. This will presumably result in three pools of prospective teachers, one for each approach. From these teachers will be selected those to take part in the experiment, presumably all women, to be equated as nearly as possible on various factors.

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Many of us feel in our bones the superior promise of the bilingual approach, even as measured in English. Previous research (The Iloilo Project, 1956; Modiano, 1968; Richardson, 1968; Treviño, 1968) points clearly in this direction, but still proof cannot be said to be conclusive. We hope that our experiment will bring us closer to this objective while educating

children who have a literate command of their first language and are proud to identify themselves with their ancestral culture, knowing that this makes them not less American but rather better educated Americans.

Presented at the fourth annual TESOL Convention, San Francisco, California
March 20, 1970